



Cook County Land Bank Advisory Committee (LBAC)
Meeting Notes
MacArthur Foundation
October 3, 2012

Following introductions, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle offered a context for the work of the LBAC and a clearly stated charge for the members, including:

- The minimal role that Cook County played in regional economic development prior to her administration and her interest in expanding that role significantly
- Data demonstrating the scale of foreclosures and the faltering real estate market throughout Cook County
- A direct charge to
 - recommend a preferred model for the establishment of a Cook County land bank;
 - advise on the potential budget, financing strategies, target areas, scope of services and governance structure
 - evaluate ways to market existing tax incentive classes and integrate them with the activities of a land bank to best achieve community revitalization, economic growth and development of residential, commercial and industrial sites and open space.
- An announcement that the Center for Community Progress, a national not-for-profit organization and premier subject matter experts on the development, operation and support of land banks, will provide technical support to the Committee's discussions.
- Recognition that many in the room including the MacArthur Foundation, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest and South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association have already been involved in efforts to establish a land bank
- Closing with her expectations that the LBAC work will:
 - Provide a unified structure for a consensus land bank program in Cook County.
 - Create a platform for establishing new housing, community and economic development activity.
 - Strengthen the position of local communities in their critical roles as front line partners in gaining control of vacant, abandoned and foreclosed properties.
 - Promote sustainability through reclamation, reuse and redevelopment of underutilized property
 - Lead to policy changes and programs to address long-standing problems of blight in Cook County.

Following the President's remarks, Economic Development Bureau Chief Herman Brewer gave an overview of the LBAC process including: the schedule of Committee meetings; a summary of the working group and its approach in supporting the Committee's deliberations; the role of the Center for Community Progress; and the schedule of reports due to be produced by the Committee: one 60-day report recommending a land bank model for Cook County and a second report in 90 days on how the model might be integrated with the existing Cook County tax incentive and No Cash Bid programs.

Following Chief Brewer's remarks, Frank Alexander of the Center for Community Progress made a presentation summarizing the evolution and trends in land bank development and operations nationally. In his presentation, Frank Alexander highlighted key advances in land banking over the years since the idea was pioneered in 1971. Land banks have moved from its role as principally a tax foreclosure tool in the early 1970s to more focused inventory control since 2002 to producing more

condensed and easily understood statutes since 2011. Frank also stressed the importance of positioning land banks as a tool to address declining property values as opposed to positioning land banks as tools for property assembly. He also stressed the importance of aligning disposition strategies with local municipal priorities.

Following Frank Alexander, Amy Hovey of the Center for Community Progress presented a detailed examination of challenges and best practices in land bank efforts around the nation. Her presentation centered on a number of case studies which prescribed best practices successfully employed by land banks around the country dealing with practical and value-added uses for vacant properties, strategies for their maintenance, repurposing vacant properties to support job creation and workforce development, community engagement and partnerships, crime reduction and common development tools.

Following lunch, representatives from five Cook County government offices offered summaries of existing programs, practices and statutes that might be leveraged to support a land bank model, including Stephanie Milito who summarized the Cook County No Cash Bid Program, a low cost way for municipalities to acquire property via the tax lien process. Tatia Gibbons of the Office of the Cook County State's Attorney offered key points of law pertaining to the tax lien processes and how they might impact potential structure and operation of a land bank in Cook County. Based on further questions of law and state statute resulting from the Committee's discussions, Cook County Bureau of Economic Development staff committed to compiling a list of questions in a letter requesting opinions from the Office of the State's Attorney. Also presenting on the roles of their offices with the tax collection and tax lien processes were: Bod Kruse of the Cook County Assessor's Office; Bill Kouruklis and Peter Nester of the Cook County Treasurer's Office and Barbara Pressl of the Cook County Clerk's Office

Several key recommendations resulting from the day's discussions and questions among the LBAC members included:

- **Develop a better sense of the scale of the foreclosure problem:** It was suggested that data and analysis from a source like the Woodstock Institute might be a good starting point.
- **Develop a set of guiding principles or priorities** for the proposed land bank and map out how the various models help achieve those priorities.
- **Consider separate strategies to deal with different categories of properties** that might come under the control of the land bank such as distressed properties with little to no value versus higher value properties that might attract private interest if certain obstacles can be removed.
- **Compile a matrix** outlining the four possible land bank organizational structures, the priorities identified above, and key existing legal statutes impacting each of the structures. The four structures to be consider are:
 - A) a land bank operated by the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development;
 - B) a not-for-profit land bank formed under the charter of Cook County government;
 - C) a not-for-profit land bank formed under the charter of the Housing Authority of Cook County;
 - D) a private independent not-for-profit.
- **Produce land bank case studies** for Atlanta/Fulton County, Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) and the Twin Cities
- **Prepare a flow chart** graphically displaying how the Annual Tax Sale, Over-the-Counter Sale, Scavenger Sale and No Cash Bid all relate to one another.

- A recommendation that the land bank prioritize assisting local governments with cleaning up the titles and tax liens on properties already under municipal control.
- A suggestion that local municipalities might benefit from a list of properties within their jurisdictions scheduled to be offered as part of any upcoming tax sales.

October 3, 2012 LBAC Meeting Attendees

- Toni Preckwinkle, President, Cook County Board of Commissioners
- MarySue Barrett, President, Metropolitan Planning Council (LBAC Chair)
- Herman Brewer, Bureau Chief, Cook County Bureau of Economic Development (ex-officio)
- Jeff Bartow, Executive Director, Southwest Organizing Project
- Dave Chandler, Principal Business Analyst, Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Pam Daniels-Halisi, Managing Director, The Private Bank
- David Doig, President, Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives
- Julie Dworkin, Policy Director, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
- Cami Freeman (*for Mary Kenney, Executive Director*), Illinois Housing Development Authority
- William Goldsmith, President, Mercy Portfolio Services
- Calvin Holmes, President, Chicago Community Loan Fund
- Michael Jasso, Managing Deputy Commissioner, Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development
- La Von Johns, Pugh, Jones & Johnson, P.C.
- Craig Mizushima, Senior VP, MW Regional Affordable Housing & Community Development, US Bank
- Rich Monocchio, Executive Director, Housing Authority of Cook County
- Bishop Claude Porter, President/CEO, Proviso Leyden Council for Community Action
- Kathleen Ransford, Quintairos, Prieto, Wood & Boyer (formerly Chicago Law Department, Real Estate Division)
- Rich Sciortino, Brinshore Development, LLC
- Jeff Sherwin, Northlake Mayor and Chair, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Housing and Community Development Committee
- Julia Stasch, Vice President, U.S. Programs, MacArthur Foundation
- Gene Williams, Lynwood Mayor and Past President, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association